

Report Golden Gate National Recreation Area

■ 1.0 Site Description

Covering some 74,000 acres of land and water, California's Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) is the largest urban national park in the world. It is nearly two and a half times the size of San Francisco and boasts 28 miles of coastline. The GGNRA offers spectacular natural beauty, including redwood forests, beaches, grassy hillsides, marshes, and rocky shoreline, as well as historic attractions that underscore the Bay Area's importance as a military outpost since the arrival of Spanish soldiers and missionaries in the eighteenth century.

The GGNRA consists of a number of individual sites managed by the National Park Service (NPS). Geographically speaking, these sites can be grouped into two categories: the wild, open terrain north of the Golden Gate Bridge in Marin County, and the urban parklands and historic sites immediately south and east of the bridge. Urban parkland activities include walking, cycling, fishing, picnicking, and interpretive programs. They center around the famous Presidio and Alcatraz Island. Activities in Marin include hiking, backpacking, and camping and center around Muir Woods National Monument.

Transportation options to and within various GGNRA sites vary as a function of their distance from San Francisco; the more distant areas are an hour's drive and are accessible only by private automobile and tour bus, while other sites, directly adjacent to San Francisco proper, are within walking distance of the city's downtown. A ferry serves Alcatraz from Fisherman's Wharf. Because of the GGNRA's proximity to a large metropolitan area, it is used frequently by local residents seeking an escape from urban living, as well as by tourists visiting San Francisco. In 1999, over 14 million recreational visits were made to the GGNRA.

Seven visitor centers are located within the NRA: the Alcatraz Island Visitor Center, in the middle of San Francisco Bay; the Cliff House Visitor Center, on the western side of San Francisco; the Fort Point Bookstore, on the Presidio underneath the south anchorage of the Golden Gate Bridge; the Marin Headlands Visitor Center, three miles west of the northern side of the Golden Gate Bridge; the Muir Woods Visitor Center, at the entrance to the Muir Woods; the Pacific West Regional Information Center, at Fort Mason in San Francisco; and the William Penn Mott Jr. Visitor Center, on the Presidio in San Francisco.

Other park resources outside the GGNRA include the Samuel P. Taylor State Park and Point Reyes National Seashore, both to the north of Muir Woods, and the Point Reyes-Farallon Islands National Marine Sanctuary off the Pacific coast.

The Golden Gate National Recreation Area can be divided into three main sites, described below.

Muir Woods National Monument

In Marin County, the best-known GGNRA attraction is the Muir Woods National Monument, a majestic redwood forest 12 miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge covering approximately 560 acres. The original land for the park was donated to the federal government by Congressman William Kent and his wife Elizabeth, who were anxious to save the redwoods from logging. The Kents purchased 295 acres in 1905 for \$45,000, and in 1908 President Theodore Roosevelt declared them a national monument. “This is the best tree-lovers monument that could possibly be found in all the forests of the world,” once declared the conservationist John Muir, for whom the site is named.

Three other attractions are associated with Muir Woods. Muir Beach is a semi-circular cove three miles south of the Muir Woods Visitor Center that provides dramatic views of the California coastline. Stinson Beach is a sandy beach three miles west of the Center, beneath steep hills that rise to Mount Tamalpais. Olema Valley is a long stretch of forested canyons, tree-lined ridges, open grassy slopes, and historic farm buildings northwest of the Center.

Annual visitation to Muir Woods in 1999 was 883,000. Today, a \$2.00 admission is charged, but in the past, when admission was free, annual visitation was as high as 1.5 million.

Alcatraz Island

Alcatraz Island is one of the GGNRA’s most popular destinations, offering a close-up look at an historic and infamous federal prison off-limits to the public during its 34 years of operation. Visitors to the island can not only explore the remnants of the prison, but can learn about the Native American occupation of 1969-1971, early military fortifications, and the West Coast’s first (and oldest operating) lighthouse. There are many natural features on the island as well, including gardens, tide pools, bird colonies, and spectacular views of San Francisco Bay. The NPS offers a range of interpretive walks, a self-guided tour, an orientation video, a recorded tour inside the cellhouse, and several exhibits.

Presidio of San Francisco

The Presidio is an urban park located on the northwestern edge of San Francisco, overlooking the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco Bay. Within its 1,480 acres are hundreds of historic buildings, a collection of coastal defense fortifications, a national cemetery, an historic airfield, a saltwater marsh, forests, beaches, native plant habitats, coastal bluffs, 11 miles of hiking trails, and 14 miles of cycling routes. The Presidio served as a military post for 218 years, under the flags of Spain (1776-1822), Mexico (1822-1848), and the United States (1848-1994). In 1989, the U.S. Army announced it would close the base it had maintained there for 150 years, and in 1994 transferred ownership of the site to the

NPS. Currently, the Presidio is undergoing transformation from a military complex into a civilian park.

The entire Presidio had been designated a National Historic Landmark. Of the 870 existing structures, 620 are classified as historic structures; 276 buildings are to be removed for restoration of open space; 300 acres of Presidio historic forest are to be maintained as part of a cultural landscape; and museums have been proposed that will highlight Native American, military, and California and western history.

Annual visitation in the late 1990s was 3.5 million, a number that is expected to grow substantially as improvements to the park are made. Visitation in 2000 was expected to reach 6.5 million, and 8.4 million in 2010.

The Presidio is home to the Fort Point National Historic Site, a fort constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers between 1853 and 1861 to prevent the entrance of a hostile navy into San Francisco Bay. In 1999, annual visitation was 1.7 million.

■ 2.0 Existing ATS

Muir Woods National Monument

Major access to the site is by U.S. 101 and Highway 1. Access roads (Muir Woods Road and Camp Eastwood Road) are steep and winding, and vehicles over 35-feet long are prohibited. Parking is limited and fills up quickly on most days.

No public transportation directly serves the park. Golden Gate Transit bus #63, which runs on weekends and holidays, makes stops at various points that are a 1- to 1.8-mile hike down to the woods.

Alcatraz Island

A single concessionaire, Blue and Gold Fleet, provides regular, year-round ferry service to Alcatraz departing from Fisherman's Wharf. Fisherman's Wharf is a popular tourist destination in its own right, not far from San Francisco's Marina District, Russian Hill, Chinatown, and Nob Hill. It is well-served by various ATS.

Presidio of San Francisco

The Presidio is served by a variety of local public transportation services and provides good interior access through an extensive roadway, parking lot, bicycle, and hiking trail system. Many San Francisco residents and tourists can reach the site by foot or bicycle. In addition, San Francisco Municipal Railway (MUNI) buses serve the Presidio via the 28, 29, 43, and 82X lines. Bus service from the North Bay to the Golden Gate Bridge toll plaza is

available through Golden Gate Transit. Commercial cable car buses are available from Fisherman's Wharf.

■ 3.0 ATS Needs

Muir Woods National Monument

In the past five years, several ATS and comprehensive transportation planning and infrastructure studies have been conducted within the GGNRA. In some cases, these transportation studies have focused on the needs and issues specific to Muir Woods National Monument while others have focused on potential ATS issues and needs for Muir Woods NM as an integrated element of the GGNRA as a whole. These studies have included development of a Specific Plan for Muir Woods NM; development of a Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan for GGNRA; and development of a San Francisco Bay Water Transportation System Plan for selected GGNRA units in San Francisco and Marin County. The GGNRA Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan and Water Transportation System Plan were initiated in early 2000 and are currently underway, with completion scheduled for sometime in 2001.

ATS needs at Muir Woods NM will include:

- Muir Woods NM has limited on-site parking for passenger cars, tour buses, and other potential ATS vehicles. The supply of parking is quite low compared to demand on busy visitation days and there is limited potential for building additional capacity on-site.
- During particularly busy visitation periods, parking overflow occurs regularly causing visitors to park their vehicles on the narrow roadways adjacent to the on-site lot. This is a major concern of residents as roadway parking increases congestion and reduces traffic safety.
- The majority of visitors travel to the NM using rented or personal passenger cars while some groups access the site using private tour buses. There are currently limited opportunities for local residents or visitors to access the Muir Woods NM using the current public transportation services run by Marin County and Golden Gate Transit.
- There are no remote park-and-ride/shuttle bus services or coordinated ATS services associated with transportation access to and from the Muir Woods NM and other attractions (Mount Tamalpais) and units (Stinson Beach) within the GGNRA. In addition, there are no water transportation services currently available in the Bay Area to access the NM or other GGNRA units.
- There are no current water transportation services to Muir Woods NM to and from other GGNRA attractions in San Francisco such as Alcatraz and Fort Point. The NPS is currently evaluating the merits of such as service that would include docking locations

in Marin and San Francisco counties and shuttle bus services to transport tourists to and from attraction such as Muir Woods.

Alcatraz Island

Alcatraz Island is well-served by the private concessionaire, Blue and Gold Fleet. This service provides regular, daily, year-round ferry service to Alcatraz departing from Fisherman's Wharf. There are weaknesses in the current system, however:

- There are no linked water services to other GGNRA units in the Bay Area, including Muir Woods NM, Fort Point, and other attractions. Coordinated, linked water transportation services would potentially reduce the need for visitors to travel to and from GGNRA attractions by private car. If these linked ferry services were developed, coordinated shuttle bus services would be required to transport visitors accessing other GGNRA locations in the Bay Area such as Stinson Beach, Muir Woods NM, and other locations.
- The majority of Alcatraz visitors typically use high-priced, private parking lots on Fisherman's Wharf. In some cases, visitors use on-street metered parking. In this primarily tourist area of San Francisco, the majority of on-street metered parking adjacent to Fisherman's Wharf is in effect every day including holidays and Sundays. Therefore, visitors risk on-street parking violations that increase the parking cost associated with a visit to Alcatraz.
- The roadways in the Fisherman's Wharf area of San Francisco are also very congested and parking is difficult and often unavailable during busy periods. Remote parking lots/shuttle services are not available to transport visitors to and from the Fisherman's Wharf area to access Alcatraz.

Presidio of San Francisco

The Presidio's General Management Plan (GMP) and General Management Plan Amendment (GMPA) included a variety of transportation system improvement recommendations for traffic, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation. The Presidio also recently prepared the *Transportation Planning and Analysis Report, and Summary Document* designed to assess the impacts of many of the recommended transportation improvements identified in the GMP including a variety of potential ATS projects. As part of this analysis, the Presidio developed a *Bus Management Plan* and pedestrian and bike route plan.

The Presidio is also participating in the Doyle Drive Replacement Study EIS/EIR and Design Study that will include improved transportation access and operations for movements in to, out of, and through the Presidio to and from Golden Gate Bridge. Doyle Drive is the elevated expressway structure leading to and from Golden Gate Bridge with a right-of-way directly through the northern edge of the Presidio in San Francisco. This facility was damaged by the Loma Prieta Earthquake of 1989 and is currently under study

to evaluate alternative future alignments, designs, and technology strategies such as Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and ATS.

The Presidio is also currently evaluating future on-site land use development alternatives that will impact the potential implementation of ATS and other transportation improvements in the Park. This analysis is designed to assess the potential transportation improvements required to meet the predicted increases in future travel demand generated by these new land uses, including office, service, and other industries.

As part of these study initiatives, there are a variety of ATS needs at the Presidio, including:

- Development of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies for the new services, offices, and large companies that are proposed to relocate to the Presidio (such as Lucas Films) to encourage employees to use ATS and ridersharing.
- Improved transit and traffic access and egress to the Presidio through the proposed future alignment of Doyle Drive (especially improved transportation access from San Francisco's Marina District).
- Development of an integrated MUNI and Golden Gate Transit terminal on Presidio grounds (that is currently adjacent to Golden Gate Bridge) located likely near the old Letterman Hospital (soon to be the site of Lucas Films). This relocation of public transportation services will be designed to help transport future employees located at land uses within the Presidio as well as tourists visiting the Park.
- Refinement of the Presidio shuttle bus service recently begun in the Presidio to transport visitors to attractions within the Presidio and to other GGNRA attractions in San Francisco. Refinements would include increased frequencies, improved transit coverage and service routing changes to integrate with the proposed transit terminal in the vicinity of Letterman Hospital, increased number of shuttle buses to enable the Presidio to transport more passengers, and increased level of integrated shuttle bus/park-and-ride lot services.
- Development of a network of on-site and remote park-and-ride lots designed to integrate with the refined Presidio shuttle bus service and to integrate with the proposed public transportation service improvements (MUNI, Golden Gate Transit, Letterman Hospital transit terminal) expected to be implemented in the future. Employee and visitor parking lots should be established to transport the different Park users.
- Reconstruction of selected parking lots at Presidio locations including adding capacity to the parking facility near the old Sutro Baths site near the Pacific Ocean. This particular lot currently has a limited supply of parking especially during busy periods. There tends to be spillover parking on local streets as capacity is reached causing traffic safety hazards.

■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

Each of the GGNRA units presented in this report, Muir Woods NM, Alcatraz Island, and the Presidio of San Francisco is currently evaluating a variety of ATS projects and strategies designed to improve transportation mobility and accessibility for employers, employees, and visitors. The National Park Service has recognized the need for improving the transportation systems for GGNRA units, and in particular, for the detailed evaluation and analysis of ATS projects. Based on this need, these recent and current transportation planning and ATS projects were coordinated and funded by the NPS. These studies were initiated for several reasons, including the need to:

- Reduce future visitor vehicle traffic traveling to and from GGNRA units that suffer increased traffic congestion and reduced traffic safety on local, two-lane roadways in Marin County (Muir Woods NM in particular);
- Reduce future employee vehicle traffic to the proposed new land uses in the Presidio by providing ATS and TDM alternatives to driving personal vehicles to their place of employment; and
- Improve the overall quality of the tourist visit to GGNRA attractions by providing easy to use and integrated transportation services within individual units (Presidio) and integrated with a number of units (GGNRA units in Marin County and the Presidio to other San Francisco GGNRA units).

In some cases, such as GGNRA's Water Transportation Study and the Comprehensive Transportation Management Plan in Marin County, ATS are being designed and evaluated to improve transportation visitor access between GGNRA attractions in Marin and San Francisco counties. GGNRA is also in the process of implementing a park-and-ride lot adjacent to Highway 101 in Marin County designed to transport visitors to Muir Woods NM and other Marin County attractions using NPS shuttle services and potentially local public transportation services. Other projects being evaluated in Marin County include the development of NPS shuttle services that integrate with Muir Woods NM, Stinson Beach, Marin Headlands bicycle and hiking trailheads, and other attractions such as Mount Tamalpais. Reconstruction of the Muir Woods NM parking lot is also being evaluated to reduce the spillover parking on local roadways adjacent to the attraction.

GGNRA is also evaluating integrated water transportation services between its attractions in San Francisco and Marin County. Potential services would include integrated water transportation services with Alcatraz, Fort Point, the Presidio, and locations in Marin County to allow other modes of visitor travel to Muir Woods NM and other NPS attractions.

The Presidio is also working with the city and county of San Francisco to develop integrated ATS projects to transport employees and visitors using public transportation and NPS shuttle bus services. The Presidio has also evaluated the need to improve current parking lots, develop new remote and on-site park-and-ride/shuttle bus services, and build an integrated transit center designed to move visitors and future employees using both local public transportation and NPS shuttle bus services.